



IHRAAM STATEMENT/INTERVENTION

PARTICIPANTS UN REGIONAL MEETING GENEVA, SWITZERLAND NOVEMBER 23 – 25, 2017

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DEAR MEMBERS OF THE U.N. OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND FELLOW REPRESENTATIVES FROM CIVIL SOCIETY ATTENDING THIS DISTINGUISHED REGIONAL MEETING --- IT IS WITH DEEP CONCERN AND URGENCY THAT WE SHARE THIS INTERVENTION REGARDING THE PLIGHT OF PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT, PARTICULARLY THOSE OF US WHO ARE CITIZENS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

On behalf of the *International Human Rights Association of American Minorities (IHRAAM)*, a NGO in Consultative Status with the UN Economic & Social Council (ECOSOC); and our affiliate organization known as the *Core Planning Group for Historically Black Colleges & University Development (CPG-OHBCUD, Inc)* --- we welcome, with gratitude, the opportunity to share these few remarks. We had the good fortune to testify before *Working Group of Experts'* fruitful and highly productive fact-finding visits to the USA in January, 2016. We rise again today to reconfirm and draw additional attention to the increasingly deteriorating plight of People of African Descent in the United States of America.

Ever since the inaugural investigation of the then UN Special Rapporteur, the Honorable Maurice Glele-Ahanhanzo, as released in 1995, each successive UN visiting Team of Experts has documented the gross disparities between African-American and European-American communities – relative to such major socio-economic indicators as: health, education, housing, employment, political participation, economic development, criminal justice, the application of the death penalty, police violence, and incitement to racial hatred. The distinguished *Working Group of Experts*, as recently as 2016, has also noted the same systemic and deeply rooted indicators of socio-economic, educational and socio-political disparities that currently impact the lives of millions of Americans of African Descent. The UN Working Group presented to the US government, and the world community at large, an extremely well rationalized and brilliantly crafted series of “*conclusions*” and “*recommendations*”. Such results are well known to some, largely ignored domestically by those in authority and remain sadly unfamiliar to the masses of those African Descendant citizens in the US most desperately in need of such knowledge and understanding.

Unfortunately, a now full generation of UN studies have repeatedly noted the same socio-historically ingrained and proportionally troubling disparities evidenced by every major indicator of social well-being for the masses of people of African Descent in the US. We need not cite the all too familiar statistics. Suffice it to say that IHRAAM, and a delegation of African Americans representing various sectors of US and Canadian civil society, were fortunate to have attended the UN World Conference Against Racism (UNWCAR) in Durban, South Africa (2001). Since then, along with so many others, we continue to fully affirm the core principles noted in the resulting *Durban Declaration and Program of Action*. We fully

recognize and applaud support for UN General Assembly Resolution 68/237, noting the ***“Proclamation of the International Decade for People of African Descent”*** which began January 1, 2015.

IHRAAM filed an Alternative Report (AR) with the UNHRC in response to the US UPR of May, 2015. Our representatives were present at the proceedings of the 22nd Session of the UNHRC, and a day earlier held a special side-session addressing the unique socio-cultural concerns of US citizens of African Descent, particularly those associated with our ***Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs)***, as well as other ***Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs)*** of higher education. Combined, there are well over 200 such institutions in the US. They continue to produce the largest percentage African American teachers, scientists, doctors, federal judges, engineers, government officials and related workers that impact the well-being of our society at every conceivable level. In today’s troubled environment, their institutional rights, historic legacy, and reciprocal socio-economic impact upon the communities they serve, remain severely threatened.

IHRAAM also observed, with great interest, the well over 300 UN State-based recommendations that were made in response to the US UPR in 2015, as presented in Geneva. We were subsequently invited and provided a further intervention at the follow up and US-based *Town Hall Session* held July 20, 2015 by the US Department of State Inter-Agency UPR Team, in Washington, DC.

IHRAAM proposed then, as we also strongly propose in this august setting, that the State Department US UPR Team, as well as the esteemed members of the *Working Group of Experts*, should:

1. Take full note of the overwhelming number of UN State recommendations made that the US should do the following - (a) ratify all international HR treaties to which it is not a party, (b) consider establishing a National Human Rights Institution (HRI), (c) adopt and implement a Plan of Action consistent with the Durban Declaration and Program of Action, (d) Strengthen and implement existing laws and legislation to eliminate all forms of racism and discrimination, and (e) actively promote the right to education for vulnerable minority and ethnic groups and fully consult with them to correct historical and present injustices; and
2. Carefully consider IHRAAM’s Alternative Report (AR) in response to the US UPR as addressed during the proceeding of the ***22nd Session*** of the UNHRC. In that report we called for the creation of an ***OFFICE OF HBCU DEVELOPMENT & INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION***. A ***Core Planning Group*** has already been established and is helping facilitate the further development of a self-determining network of HBCU/PBI administrators, faculty, students, alumni and community representatives ---- all stakeholders having a common commitment, within the framework of international law, to the preservation and continued development of these vitally important institutions. This represents a new and fully democratized paradigm for addressing the collective socio-educational and economic plight of our HBCUs and the increasingly marginalized African-American heartland communities of which they are an integral part.

The ***Core Planning Group, Inc*** is presently conducting a national series of informational Human Rights Workshops at various HBCUs/PBIs throughout the USA. These Human Rights Workshops are titled ***“People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice and Development – Preserving the Legacy of HBCUs/ PBIs and Institutionalizing Support of Community Stakeholders”***.

A key objective of these ongoing CPG, Inc Workshops is to collaboratively identify a HBCU or PBI institution that will serve as the ***National Venue*** for an ***Annual Review*** of progress being made toward the full execution of the UN General Assembly’s ***“Programme of Activities for the Implementation of***

the International Decade for People of African Descent (UN/RES/69/19: 2015-2024), and related International Human Rights Treaty Obligations. An inaugural and public review is planned for 2018.

Therefore, we trust that we will be able to continue this conversation. We further hope that as such annual reviews and program activities are planned for various HBCU's in the years ahead, we may humbly welcome the collaboration and input of *the UN Working Group*, the good services of the UN's *Department of Public Information (DPI)* and our colleagues from all sectors of civil society.

PLEASE SHARE THIS CONTACT INFORMATION WITH YOUR RESPECTIVE NETWORKS: THANK YOU !!!

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